The Honorable Kevin Cotter Chairman The Honorable Klint Kesto Majority Vice-Chairman The Honorable Phil Cavanagh Minority Vice-Chairman Judiciary Committee Michigan House of Representatives Lansing, MI 48933

May 19, 2014

Representatives Cotter, Kesto and Cavanagh,

We, the undersigned, urge you to stand with breastfeeding women and their families by supporting Senate Bill 674 – the "Breastfeeding Anti-Discrimination Act".

Breastfeeding is a public health imperative. Breastfeeding protects women against uterine, breast and ovarian cancers. It also is protective against type II diabetes, heart disease and high blood pressure. Women who breastfeed recover from pregnancy and childbirth more quickly and report lower rates of post partum depression. Breastfeeding protects children against childhood obesity, ear infections, leukemia, sudden infant death syndrome, among other health concerns. Children who are breastfed also, on average, score higher on tests of intelligence.

2013 CDC data shows that 74.6% of Michigan women initiate breastfeeding at the hospital. However, only 13% meet the American Academy of Pediatrics recommended 6 months of exclusive breastfeeding. Many women do not receive the support they need to make their breastfeeding goals because of outside barriers – including discrimination.

Unfortunately, instances of discrimination against women who feed their children in public are still common. Each of the undersigned has either personally experienced discrimination, or knows someone who has. While current law states discrimination against breastfeeding women is illegal, without opportunity to take civil action, current law is not strong enough. The law should not tolerate discrimination against women for protecting their health and nurturing their children.

In summary, supporting a woman's right to breastfeed without fear of discrimination is imperative for the health of the family. Women who breastfeed should be supported when doing something so foundational to their long-term health and the healthy development of their children. We urge you to allow SB 674 out of your committee to be voted upon in the Michigan House of Representatives.

Sincerely,

The Wayne County Breastfeeding Coalition

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